According to the earliest geographical conception of the Purases, the earth was taken to consist of four continental regions, viz, Jambudvipa, Keumata, Bhadravavasa, and Uttarakuru. Jambudvipa stood for India proper. Keumata represented the Oxus region, as the river Saxas (Vaksa) flowed through it. Bhadravavasa signified the Jaxartes region, as the river Sita watered it, and Uttarakuru denoted the country beyond it. In Buddhist texts these continental regions are differently named as Jambudvipa, to the south of Mount Sumur (Sineru), Aparagodena (Aparagayana) to its west, Paravudena to its east, and Uttarakuru to its north. Both these traditions agree on the fact that Uttarakuru was the name of the region to the north of India.

The name Uttarakuru or northern Kur is used in contradistinction to Dakinakuru or southern Kur. In the Mahabharata the Uttarakurus are juxtaposed with the Dakinakurus. The distance between their countries can be measured by the marches of Arjuna described in the Sabhasparvan. After crossing the White Mountain (Svaparnabhadra), he marched through Kimpurusvaska and reached the Maniserova Lake in the court of the Hatakas, dominated by the Gandharvas. From there he entered into the region called Harivarsa, beyond which lay the land of the Uttarakurus. Elsewhere in the epic the region to the north of India, corresponding to Svetaparsva and Kimpurusvaska, is called Halmavata, and the site of the Maniserova Lake is indicated by the mountain Hemakuta, beyond which is said to lie Harivarsa. The Kailasa Range, running parallel to the Ladhak Range, 50 miles behind it, is, thus, the dividing line between Halmavata and Harivarsa. According to Bana, Arjuna reached the Hemakuta mountain, whose caves were echoing with the twangs of the bows of the initiated Gandharvas, after traversing the territory of China. Here the use of the word China seems to be intended to denote the Mongoloid people of the Himalayan regions, also called Kirta, a word derived from Kirtati or Kirati the name of a group of people in eastern Nepal. Beyond Harivarsa, including the territories of Tibet, lay the idyllic and utopian land of the Kurus, called Uttarakuru. This was the land of mystery and solitude, where nothing familiar could be seen, and it was useless to wage war. According to a tradition, the head of the demon Mahisa, severed by Skanda, formed a huge mountain, that blocked the entry into the Uttarakuru
country. Yet Arjuna is said to have reached its frontier and conquered the northern Kurus living there. The result of this campaign was that the people of the mountainous regions presented themselves with the offerings of garlands of jade, characteristic of Uttarakuru, and the powerful herbs of the Trans Kailasa territory at the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhishtira.

It is clear from the above account of the location of Uttarakuru that it lay to the north of the Himalayas, possibly, beyond Tibet. In the vicinity of the mountain Meru, which seems to represent the Parnas, as shown by Sylvain Levi, according to the Great Epic, this land was marked by idyllic pleasure, bucolic beauty and sylvan silence. The trees produced elegant fruits and flowers; the earth yielded gold and rubies; the seasons were agreeable; the people were healthy and cheerful and had a life-span of 11,000 years; they passed their time in song, dance and love-making and among them sexual relations were promiscuous and unbridled. It was a veritable land of gods (devaloka). There the righteous people were born to enjoy the fruits of their meritorious deeds.

In particular, the warriors, losing their life on the battle field, were transferred to that region. Even those, who made gifts of houses to Brahmanas were entitled to be born in that country. These data show that Uttarakuru cannot be the bleak mountainous country of the Himalayas, but the region to the north of it, watered by the Tarim and its tributaries, where the oases-states of Bhasaka, Kuca, Karashah and Turfan, on the northern route, and Khotan, Niya, Endere, Calmedena, Koraina, Charkik and Miran, on the southern route, flourished in ancient times. Chinese travellers and pilgrims have testified to the prosperity and richness of these regions and the religiosity and righteousness of their people and Indian writers have described their luxury, affluence, wealth and bliss by the terms Manikancaavasa, Bhadrasavasa, Gandharvaloka and Aparagodana.

The names Kurus and Uttarakuru came into vogue in the Brahmana period. It is significant that the word “Kuru” is conspicuous by absence in the earliest strata of the Rigveda. Only once in the tenth mandala there is a reference to Kurusavasa Trasodasayava, but he is called the king of the Kurus. Even in the territory of the Drasadvati, Sarasvati and Ajaya, later known as Kuruksetra on account of the association of the Kurus the Bharata kings are said to have kindled the sacred fires. In the Apur hymns Sarasvatii is mentioned with Bhaitasi the glory of the Bharatas. In the Vajasaneyi Samhita the Bharatae appear in place of the Kurus, Pancalas. But in the Brahmana texts the Kurus become very prominent
and are usually associated with the Pancaelas.\textsuperscript{14} They are also said to be in occupation of the territory, through which the rivers Drasavati, Sarasvatī and Apaya flowed, and with which, consequently, came to be known as Kuruksetra.\textsuperscript{25} It was the home of later Vedic culture, its speech was best and purest and its mode of sacrifice was ideal and perfect.\textsuperscript{26}

Besides the Kūras, there are references to the Uttarakūra in Brahmana literature. In the Aitareya Brahmana (VIII, 14), it is stated that the people, living beyond the snowy regions, like the Uttarakūras, anoint their kings for Vaiśnavī, who, as result, are called Viśats. At another place in the same text (VIII, 23), Vasistha Satyayāvasī is stated to have enjoined Janarāja Viśatsi, according to the ritual of Ainīri Mahābhīsha, who, in consequence, went over the whole earth and conquered it up to the oceans. Thereupon, Vasistha Satyayāvasī demanded his fees. Viśatsi replied that when he would conquer the Uttarakūras, he would confer the whole empire on him and himself become the commander of his army. Satyayāvasī reported that the country of the Uttarakūra was the land of gods, who no body could conquer; and, since he had deceived him, he would snatch everything from him. As a result, Viśatsi lost his prowess and Susinī son of Seibya, killed him.

It is clear from the above data that the Kūras came into the limelight in the Later Vedā period. They migrated from their homeland to the north of the Himalayas, and entered into India, divining away the Bharatas and occupying their habitat between the Drasavati and Sarasvatī. Gradually, the Purus and the Bharatas mixed with them and became one people, as is clear from the expression kurava naṃ Bharataḥ occurring in the Mahābhārata (XII, 349, 64). In the beginning, their relations with the Pancaelas were good, but, in course of time, differences appeared among them and culminated in the famous Mahābhārata war.\textsuperscript{27} Though settled in the fertile and prosperous country of the Sarasvatī and the Yamuna, they preserved the memory of their idyllic home in the northern regions and treated it as the abode of gods. Another section of the Kūras reached Iran and Western Asia and penetrated into Anatolia. Traces of the vorwartsrung of the Kūras in these regions are found in a series of place-names and personal names current there. A town in Sogdia still bears the name Kurcha; two kings of the Paropakāra Ansal branch of the Achaemenian family of Iran were named Kur; a river in Transcaucasia, to the north-west of Panizis, is called Kur (Cyrus of Hellenic geographers); the region round the confluence between the river Herus and its right bank tributary, the Phrygus, just to the north of the city of Magnesia-under-
Sipylos" is known as Koroupadse, meaning the Kuru. Plain or Kuruaste, which, like its Indian namesake, was the scene of memorable wars, like those between Seleucus Nicator and Lysimachus in 281 B.C., and the Romans and Antiochus III in 190 B.C., which decided the fate of empires in that region. Thus, it appears that a wing of the Kuru left their homeland for the west, swept through the corridor between the southern foot of the Elburz Range and the northern edge of the Central Desert of Iran and reached the pasture-lands in the basin of Lake Urmiah and beyond that, in the steppe country in the lower basin of the rivers Aras and Kur, adjoining the west coast of the Caspian Sea. From there they travelled on still farther westward over the watershed between the basins of the Aras and the Qyzyl Irmen (Halys) and debouched into the Anatolian Peninsula to settle in the region called the Kuru Plain after their name. Another detachment of the Kuru found its way to Luristan and joined the Early Achaemenids; whilst a third one swung to the south-east and through Bactriana and the Hindu Kush moved into the Punjab and occupied the Sarasvati-Yamuna region. It is significant that one section of the Kuru, called Parapitayya, are known as Bahlukas, since one of the sons of Pratapas was called Bahluka. According to the Ramayana, Pururavas Aila, the progenitor of the Ailas, with whom the Kuru were associated migrated to the middle country of Salti or Bactriana. Thus, we observe that, starting from their northern homeland (Uttarakurus), the Kurus moved to the west, and, breaking into several branches, migrated into Anatolia, Luristan and the Punjab. As I have shown elsewhere, the painted grey ware, which succeeded the ochre-coloured ware, at more than fifty sites in U.P. and the Punjab and may be dated 1200-1100 B.C., was associated with the Kuruks. We may, thus, date the volkewanderung of the Kuru about the middle of the second millennium B.C. or a bit later.

The Mahabharata connects Indi with the land of Uttarakuru through Himalayan regions rather than the north-western passes. As shown above, Asjina is said to have gone there via Kshipraswara, Gandharvaloka, Haiinavata, Hemekuta and Haiinavara, corresponding to different Himalayan regions. From early times the people of the Indian plains have been in contact with the Kailas region through many routes. Some of them are: (1) from Almora via Askot, Khela, Garibyang, Lipu Lakh Pass (16,750 ft.) & Takiskat to Kailash (Tarchen) 238 miles, (2) from Almora via Askot, Khela, Darma Pass (18,510) and Gyanamand 227 miles, (3) from Almora via Bagushwar, Milam, Unna-Dhura
Pass (17,550), Jyantli Pass (18,500), Kangri-Bingri Pass (19,300) and Gyanima Mandi-110 miles, (4) from Joshimatha via Guila-Niti Pass (16,600), Nartu Mandi, Sibchilim Mandi and Gyanima Mandi-200 miles, (5) from Joshimatha via Damjan Niti Pass (15,200), Tungja-Le (16,350) Sibchilim Mandi and Gyanima Mandi-160 miles, (6) from Joshimatha via Hon-Niti Pass (16,390), Sibchilim, Mandi and Gyanima Mandi-158 miles. (7) from Badrinath via Mana Pass (18,400) Thuling Matha, Dapa, Nabra, Sibchilim and Gyanima Mandi-238 miles, (8) from Mughuva-Gangori via Nitung, Jabokha Pass (17,490), Pulling Mandi, Thuling, Dapa, Sibchilim and Gyanima Mandi-243 miles, (9) from Simla via Rampur, Shikpi Pass (15,400), Shiring La (16,400), Loacha La (16,610), Gartok (15,100), Chagnet La (16,200), and Tirthapuri-445 miles, (10) from Simla via Rampur, Shikpi Pass, Shiring La, Thuling, Dapa, Sibchilim, and Gyanima Mandi-472 miles, (11) from Spinagar (Kashmir)-via Zojila (11,670), Namnik (13,000), Fotu Le (13,446), Len (Ladakh), Taglang La (17,500), Damchok, Garguna, Gartok, Chagnet Le (16,200) and Tirthapuri-605 miles, (12) from Kathmandu (Nepal, Pasupatinath) via Mukthnath, Khochamanth and Taktok-525 miles, (13) from Kullu in Kangra District through Rampur Basahr caste via Thulling in the east there were routes connecting Assam with Tibet and China. One route passed through Yung-tch'ang and Wening and corresponds to the Burma Road. Another route led from Szecchuan to Lhasa and Assam. Often pilgrims used to bypass Tibet in the south by following the Taung-Po route. The twenty Chinese monks, who according to I-Tsing, arrived in India during the reign of Srigupta, who constructed for them a temple called Chinese Temple (Chih-na-stu), 40 Yojanas to the east of the famous Mahabodhi Temple at Nalanda, came by one of these routes. Chinese bamboo and silk reached India along these routes, whence they were carried north before the journey of Chang-Ki in the second century B.C. Later, the Chinese adventurer Wang Hsuan-Tsche advanced along one of these routes to capture Kanauj after the demise of Harsha and the usurpation of Arjuna or Avanasa in the seventh century. According to the Mulkhurkura (12, 177, 11-13) the Pandava brothers advanced north of Baidi and, scaling the Himalayas, probably via Mana Pass, Thuling Matha, Dapa, Nabra, Sibchilim and Gyanima Mandi, and passing through the lands of the Chinas, Tussar, Doradas, Kulinda etc. reached the kingdom of the Kirata king Subahu. It is noteworthy that in subsequent Indian traditions, embodied in the Great Epic, the routes leading to Uttarakuru are said to pass through the Himalayas rather than the passes of the Hindu-Kush and the Pamirs. It
appears that either there was an infiltration of people from Uttarakuru to Kuruṣhtra along the Himalayan routes, besides the immigration of these peoples from Bactrian quarters along the north-western passes, or, after the settlement of the Kuras in India, the tradition of their coming from the north-west was forgotten and a connection between their Indian abode and their aheimata beyond the Himalayas was established through Himalayan routes, that were regularly in use.

NOTES

1. Mahābhārata VI, 7, 11.
2. Papamcsudani, p. 434; Dhammapada-sattakatha, p. 482.
3. Mahābhārata, I, 102, 10.
4. Ibid., 1, 25, 5.
5. Ibid VI, 7, 6
6. Banā. Harṣarāja, ed P. V. Kane, p. 59
8. Mahābhārata II, 28, 12.
10. Ibid III, 231, 14612.
11. Ibid V, 22, 8.
12. Ibid II 48, 6.
13. Ibid II, 8, 23.
15. Mahabharta XI, 26, 17.
18. Ryneck Ill, 23.
20. Namasthiva Upanisad Brahmana IV, 2, 3, 4; Gopater Brahmana I, 2, 8; Kshaka Samhita II, 6.
21. Pariscavina Brahmanas XV, 10; Satsapta Brahmana IV, 1, 9, 13; Ativarsha Brahmana VII, 30; Namasthiva Brahmana III, 126.
22. Satsapta Brahmana III, 2, 3, 15; Sonkhyana Sutasutsa XV; 3, 15; Latyayana Sutasutsa VIII, 11, 18.
25. Mahabharata II, 63, 2112.
27. Buddha Prakash, Religious and Social Movements in Ancient Panjab. p. 23.